

AMERICA'S POET LAUREATE OF CHILDHOOD

James W. Foley's Verses Show Remarkable Insight Into Hearts of Boys and Girls

A VOLUME of verses by James W. Foley that can easily take rank with those of Eugene Field and James Whitcomb Riley has just been issued by E. P. Dutton and Company under the title of "Boys and Girls." The comparison of Mr. Foley's poems with those of his predecessors is inevitable, as they show exactly that same insight into the heart of a child and the same homely sympathy which interprets the boys' point of view without affectation and with a most natural touch of boyish mischief.

J. W. Foley was born in St. Louis, Mo., February 4, 1874. He was educated in the public schools of Dakota and the University of South Dakota. For three years he was on the Western frontier, from 1899 to 1902, in the time of Theodore Roosevelt and Marquis de Mores. In 1902 he began newspaper work at Bismarck and for a number of years he was managing editor of the Bismarck Daily Tribune. He has for the past ten years been a frequent correspondent and contributor of short stories and verses to newspapers and magazines and his name is familiar to readers of the Saturday Evening Post, the Century Magazine, the Youth's Companion and other publications that have given him a national vogue.

In addition to his newspaper and verse work, Mr. Foley has found time to be interested in State and other affairs. He is a Past Grand Master of Masons of North Dakota, has been secretary to two Governors, three times secretary of the State Senate of his State, secretary and acting chairman of the Republican committee of his State, a member of the board of trustees of the Children's Home Society, has been elected and accepted as the "poet laureate" of North Dakota, is a lecturer before the Free Lecture Association at Fargo, has become a familiar and welcome figure on the lecture platform in the Northwest and has devoted a good share of his time to readings before public school establishments.

THE ADAMS' BOYS.

The Adams' children, they just romp and play
And fall out of trees in the carelessness way,
And might break their legs from the way that they fall,
But they get up laughing and not hurt at all.
'Cause boys' bones are soft, so their grandfather said;
And John Quincy Adams, he stands on his head
And drinks from a dipper, and all over town
The boys will tell you how he drinks upside down.

The Adams' children, they make enough noise
In the yard where they live for three times as much boys,
And sometimes they laugh and you hear it as clear
As can be up to Tinker's and way over here;
'Cause they've got a dog which is almost the same
As the rest of the boys and will play every game,
And bark all the time, and he makes so much noise
He's just like the rest of the Adams' boys.

The Adams' children, they go out to ride
On a pony of theirs, with them all three astride,
And the boy up in front makes him kick up and then
The boy behind, he gets thrown off again;
And the Adams' pony, he looks just as though
He's trying to laugh when the others laugh so;
It looks like a laugh, but he can't make a noise
Like the dog or the rest of the Adams' boys.

The Adams' children, they go out to play
And sometimes their mother don't see them all day,
But she never frets, 'cause the world is too small,
So she said, for three boys to get lost in it all.
And sometimes she listens out doors and she hears
The laughing and barking way over to Geor's,
Which is most half a mile, and she smiles, because then
She knows they'll be home when they're hungry again.

The Adams' children, they get on as though
They were three great clowns, and not brothers, you know
And folks like to hear them, when they're going past,
With the big one ahead and the little one last.
They've always got playmates of their very own,
And don't have to do chores or to study alone,
And everything seems to be three times the fun
For the Adams' children as though there's just one!

THE NEIGHBOR'S BOYS.

Sombody shot our cat's eye out
An' stole our gate, an' just about
Scared Aunt Sophia Jane to death,
So she could hardly get her breath,
By puttin' on some sheets, all white,
'At just gave her a tur'ble fright,
An' who on earth do you suppose
Put on them big, white ghost's clothes
An' made that tur'ble screechy noise?
The neighbor's boys!

An' every night it's dark, you know,
Sombody plays some tick-tack-toe
On folkses' windows what's a-scared,
An' just as if they never cared
If they get caught or not; an' when
You're gone to bed they come again,
Until you're just so nervous you
Don't hardly know just what to do.
An' who makes such a scary noise?
The neighbor's boys!

An' 'en somebody tears your clothes
An' skins your face an' hurts your nose
Until it bleeds, an' then your ma
Says 'at she never, never saw
Such heathen youngsters, an' they come
An' break your sled an' pound your drum
Until it busts an' won't go 'way,
It ain't no matter what you say,
An' they're the ones 'at break your toys—
The neighbor's boys!

An' my, it's funny, 'cause you know
You ain't the only ones 'at's so,
'Cause all the next door neighbors say
It seems e'actly the same way:
An' when their boys gets hurt so's
It gives 'em tur'ble bloody nose
An' some one shoots their cat's eye out
An' plays tick-tack, they know about
Who does it an' who makes the noise—
The neighbor's boys!

ONCE UPON A TIME.

Once upon a time rare flowers grew
On every shrub and bush we used to see;
The skies above our heads were always blue,
The woods held secrets deep for you and me;
The hillsides had their caves where tales were told
Of swart cheeked pirates from a far off clime,
When cutlasses were fierce and rovers bold—
Don't you remember?—once upon a time.

Once upon a time from sun to sun
The hours were full of joy—there was no care
And webs of gaudy dreams in air were spun
Of deeds heroic and of fortunes fair;
The jangling schoolhouse bell was all the woe
Our spirits knew, and in its tuneless chime
Was all the sorrow of the long ago—
Don't you remember?—once upon a time.

Once upon a time the witches rode
In sinister and ominous parade
Upon their sticks at night, and queer lights glowed
With eery noises by the goblins made;
And many things mysterious there were
For boyish cheeks to pale at through the grime
That held them brown; and shadows queer would stir—
Don't you remember?—once upon a time.

Once upon a time our faith was vast
To compass all the things on sea and land
That boys have trembled o'er for ages past,
Nor ever could explain or understand,
And in that faith found happiness too deep
For all the gifted tongues of prose or rhyme,
And joys ineffable we could not keep—
Don't you remember?—once upon a time.

THE WADERS.

The queerest things rained down all over our street,
With long legs, like spiders, and muddy brown feet;
They must have rained down, for I saw them all run
Through puddles and mud ere the shower was done.
They're some sort of waders, and all over town,
Through pools and deep gutters they splash up and down,
Bareheaded, barelegged, barefooted and wet,
The Waders of Frogpond—I hear them splash yet.
The rain fell in torrents, the gutters' deep tides
Were black, and the rain barrels ran o'er their sides,
The frothy white waters whirled from the eavespout,
But with the first lull all the Waders came out
They danced in the frogponds, they sounded the streams
In gutters and made the air shrill with their screams,
They rolled up their dresses and trousers and dashed
Through mud, froth and water, and waded and splashed
And forth with the Waders came all kinds of dogs,
Came sailors with bark boats, came navies of frogs
Came big rubber boots on such tiny brown legs,
Came floating armadas of cans and half-kegs;
Came long poles for sounding, came all sorts of crafts,
Unseaworthy boxes made over to rafts.
I wonder if ever in my life again
I'll see so much gladness come down with the rain.
They must have rained down, for a minute ago
The frogpond was dry and deserted, you know;
There wasn't a Wader, a dog or a craft,
A pair of gum boots, a bark boat or a raft;
The eave's but done dripping, scarce dry is the spout,
When lo, all the navy of Waders is out!
The pond's full of ships as the old Spanish Main
Who'd think so much fun could come down with the rain?

A MODERN MIRACLE.

Once when I'm sick th' doctor come
An' 'en I put my tongue 'way out,
An' he says, "H-m-m! Nurse, get me some
Warm water, please." An' in about
A minute w'y, she did, an' 'en
He put a glass thing into it
An' 'en he wiped it off again
An' put it in my mouth a bit
'En after while he took it out
An' held it up w'ere he could see,
An' 'en he says, "H-m-m! 'Ist about
Too high a half of a degree."
An' 'en Ma asked him if I'm bad
An' he says "Nopel!" 'Ist gruff an' cross
'An says "W'y you can't kill a lad,
An' if you do it ain't much loss!"
An' 'en she's mad an' he 'Ist bust
Out laughin' an' he says, "Don't fret,
He's goin' to be all right, I trust.
W'y, he ain't even half dead yet."
An' 'en he felt my pulse, 'at way,
An' 'Ist he put me upon my head
An' says "There ain't no sles, I t' say,
'Cuz one of th' trustees is d'ad!"
An' my, I'm awful sorry when
He told me that, an' 'en he said
"He'll be all right by noon," an' 'en
He went away. An' Ma says "Ned,
How do you feel?" An' 'en, you know,
Since Doctor told me that, somehow,
I'm awful sick a while ago,
But, my, I'm almost well right now!

IN SWIMMING.

'Ist boys, th' kind you used to know,
What'd-y-call-him, Bos-andos
An' full of health an' out for fun,
No meanness in a one of us.
'Ist brown an' strong an' mischievous,
'Cuz that's the way 'at boys all grow—
'Ist boys, th' kind you used to know.

'Ist boys, th' kind you used to know,
What! Never climbed an apple tree
An' shook 'em down? Why, mister, you—
You never was a boy, real true!
I'll bet 'at you was mischievous
As you could be. You're foolin' us
'Cuz you can't help but see 'at we
Are boys—'Ist like you used to be.

Of course we ought to be at school,
But, my! The water's nice and cool
An' when it calls you, w'y, you 'Ist
Can't be a real boy an' resist!
An' say, "We caught a fish down there
Most two feet long—right close to w'ere
You're standing now—how don't you see
We're boys—'Ist like you used to be!"

Say, you ain't goin' to tell our ma
'At you was passin' by an' saw
Us swimmin' here. W'y, mister, you
Won't never feel right if you do,
Don't be a tattletale! W'y, say,
If you should give us boys away
You couldn't never bear to see
A boy—'Ist like you used to be.

Come on, now! You ain't going to tell
On us. I know it, 'Ist as well!
As anythin', You wouldn't hurt
Her feelin's 'Ist to do us dirt!
You won't? Thanks, mister. You're a brick.
We're goin' to swim, sir, pretty quick.
It's awful fine here, 'cuz, y' see,
We're boys—'Ist like you used to be.

THE PARTED WAYS.

I used to know a little lad,
A youngster of thirteen,
Who wasn't very good or bad,
But somewhere in between.
He had such freckles on his nose
As your nose seems to bear;
Indeed, I'd almost think that those
Were some he used to wear.

He used to have an old straw hat
All frazzled at the brim,
Indeed, I'd almost think that that
Came down to you from him.
And he had such a dog as now
Barks joyfully along
With you—it makes me wonder how
It could have lived so long.

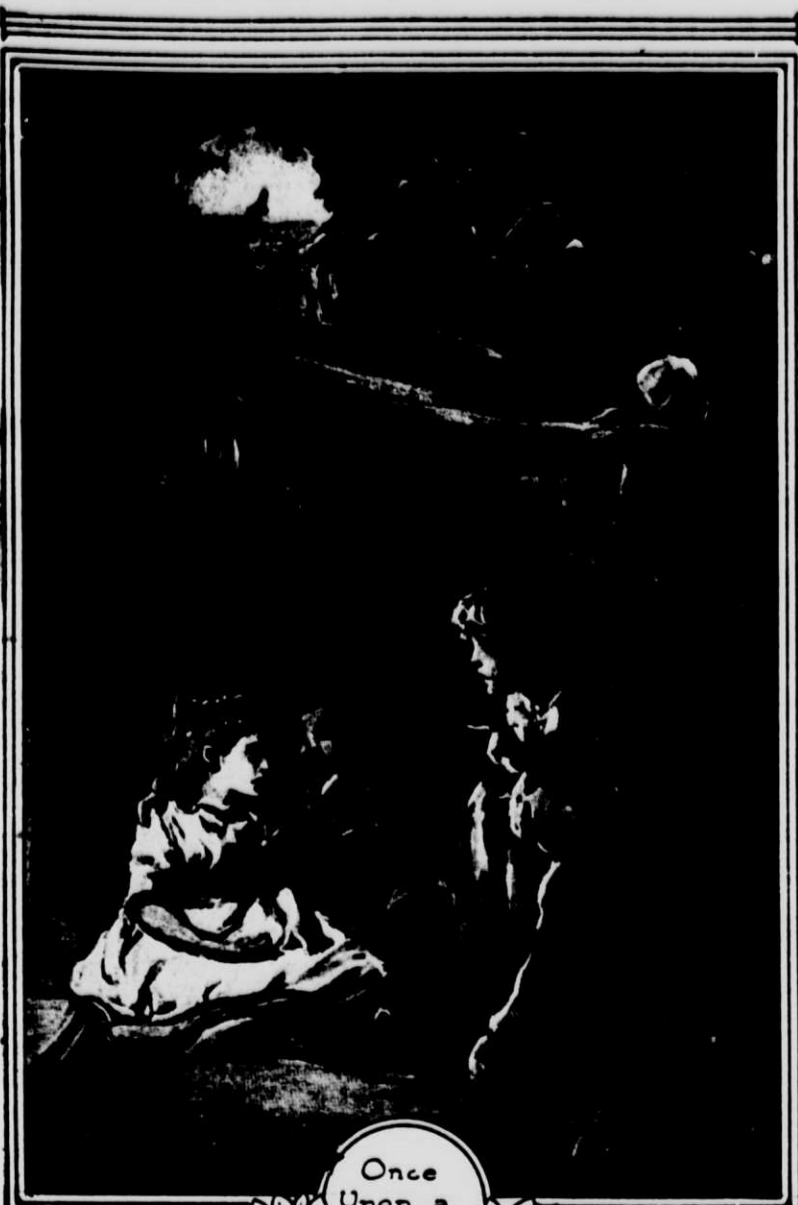
I know not where it was or when,
But with his heart of song
He went and came not back again,
And took his dreams along.
So some day in a little while
He'll wave a sunbrowned hand,
And leave you with his cheery smile—
And you will understand.

LOVERS' LANE.

How good to remember Life's June from September,
The days that were fairer than ever again;
When hearts held no sorrow to last o'er the morrow
And heads were brimful of the wisdom of ten.
No skies were e'er bluer, no heart was e'er truer
Than mine when I waited in sunshine or rain,
With joy that enriched me for one who bewitched me,
And bade me to wait till she came down the lane.

Our trysting-place gaining, my eyes they were straining
Afar down the road, and my lips hummed a tune
That held all the sweetness of first love's completeness
The whiles that I waited at morning and noon;
For last when we parted, beloved, fond hearted,
She pledged me to wait for her, sunshine or rain,
And so I kept humming, I knew she was coming,
A girl queen in gingham, somewhere down the lane.

Oh, hearts that are older, what secrets I told her!
What dreams of the future, of grown girl and boy!
For what of the weather, when two walk together
The pathway to school in the heyday of joy?
When hours are but measures of innocent pleasures,
When days brim with gladness, as winceps to drain,
When Life learns the sweetness of first love's completeness
In waiting for Her as she comes down the lane!



Once Upon a Time.



In Swimming



Lovers' Lane



A Modern Miracle



The Waders.



The Parted Ways



The Neighbor's Boys



The Adams' Boys